

adult birds as prey I have found in the literature relate to examples killed in grass fires (Brown, *et al.* 1982, Kemp 1985). The Marsh Warblers preyed on at Ngulia may have been exhausted or in poor condition after their migration although they were active enough to require the Secretary Bird to run after them and then immobilize them with kicks.

Nikolaus (1990) reported shrikes Laniidae feeding on migrating Marsh Warblers in a desert oasis in the Sudan. In addition, the timing of the breeding of Eleonora's Falcons *Falco eleonora* and Sooty Falcons *F. concolor* to coincide with the autumn migration of small passerines is well known (Cramp & Simmons 1980, Walter 1979). Whether Secretary Birds regularly exploit concentrations of grounded warblers remains to be shown by further observation.

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Harrier Hawk *Polyboroides typus* breaks open tree hole to aid prey capture
On 27 July 1990 near Kiboko on the Nairobi–Mombasa road, we observed an adult Harrier Hawk *Polyboroides typus* as it foraged in mature *Acacia xanthophloea*. The bird was searching holes and other cavities in the classic manner, clinging precariously and flapping its wings for balance at each stop. After a few minutes, it reached into a hole and grabbed a small mammal which it carried to a perch which was too heavily screened by vegetation to allow us a good view. On finishing, the hawk returned to the same tree hole and, after a moment or two of delving with its leg, proceeded to dismantle the entrance with bill and foot, stopping every few seconds to delve again. After five minutes of modification, a second small mammal was captured and carried off to the same perch. Positive identification was impossible, but the prey was similar in size to an aciarat *Thallomys paedulus*.

While hunting, harrier hawks are well known to destroy nests, like as those of weavers Ploceinae (Brown, Urban & Newman, 1982), but such modification of tree holes may be less common, and it seems worth reporting.

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New birds from Kenya's northern border area

During recent visits to the Lokichoggio area of northwestern Kenya (DAT and MACC, 11–14 August 1990), and to Kiwayu, Kiunga area, northern Kenya coast (DAT, 22–24 September 1990), the following birds were recorded for the country for the first time.

Mirafraga hypermetra kidepoensis Red-winged Bush Lark

On 14 August 1990 two birds, approximately 20–25 m apart, were observed calling from the tops of small bushes in an area of bushed grassland (altitude 500 m) some 15 km northwest of Lokichoggio towards the Kenya–Sudan border. It was clear that both birds were Red-winged Bush Larks *M. hypermetra*; the calls of both were single short, drawn out whistles, repeated every 5–6 s. Both birds appeared to be smaller than nominate *M. hypermetra* from eastern Kenya, while a buffy supercilium and the diagnostic all-rufous wings as seen in flight, were the most prominent features of both birds.

Britton (1980) states that the nominate race is locally common in bushed grasslands of the eastern plateau below 1350 m, with the smaller *kidepoensis* occurring in northeastern Uganda from Kidepo National Park to Mt Moroto. In Sudan, Cave & Macdonald (1955) show the range of *kidepoensis* as restricted to extreme southeastern areas.

This record represents a small, but not totally unexpected extension of range, and is the first record of the race *kidepoensis* from Kenya.

Cisticola ruficeps Red-pate Cisticola

On 13 August 1990, some 15 km northeast of Lokichoggio, while watching a mixed bird party comprising several Red-fronted Warblers *Spiloptila rufifrons*, White-bellied Canaries *Serinus dorsostriatus* and a single Purple Grenadier *Uraeginthus ianthinogaster*, we noticed that there were two small, chestnut headed cisticolas with them. We were able to observe the birds at close range for 15–20 min, and also relocate them with apparently the same mixed bird party early the following morning.

Both cisticolas had identical plumage, and were presumed to be a pair. The dull chestnut head and nape contrasted sharply with the warm brown upperparts, and traces of some mottling on the mantle, and buffy edgings to the primaries and wing coverts were noticed. Chin and throat were clear creamy-white shading to buffy-white on the rest of the underparts, while the tail was plain brown with broad buffy-white edgings to the outer feathers. Size was similar to that of the Tiny Cisticola *Cisticola nana*.

The plain brown upperparts identified these birds as belonging to the *mongalla* race of *C. ruficeps*, which Chappuis (1974) treated as a distinct species on account of its different voice. Unfortunately both birds were silent throughout the periods we had them under observation, and for the time being we prefer to consider *mongalla* as a race of *ruficeps*.